Catholic Teaching on Sexuality

Outside of Marriage: All sexual acts outside of marriage are intrinsically evil, always objective mortal sins, and never moral, regardless of intention or circumstance.

Within Marriage: the only type of sexual act that is good and moral and permissible is the act of natural marital relations, open to life, between one man and one woman married to each other.

Separation of Spouses: A husband and wife, joined by a valid Sacrament of Matrimony, may separate (and perhaps receive a civil divorce) only for grave reasons, but the bond of the Sacrament persists and so they may not remarry.

Divorce and Remarriage: A Catholic who is divorced and remarried without an annulment may not receive Communion, unless he or she is abstaining from all sexual relations and has a grave reason for remaining in the remarriage.

An annulment is a declaration by proper authority in the Church that a valid Sacrament of Marriage never existed between two particular persons.

Chastity and sexual sins: "Among the sins gravely contrary to chastity are masturbation, fornication, pornography, and homosexual practices…. Adultery, divorce, polygamy, and free union are grave offenses against the dignity of marriage." (CCC, n. 2396, 2400)

"**Lust** is disordered desire for, or inordinate enjoyment of, sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes." (CCC, n. 2351)

Homosexuality: "Sacred Scripture…presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life…. Under no circumstances can they be approved. (CCC, n. 2357)

"**Pornography** consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other…. It is a grave offense. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2354)

Masturbation is: "the deliberate stimulation of the genital organs in order to derive sexual pleasure. 'Both the Magisterium of the Church, in the course of a constant tradition, and the moral sense of the faithful have been in no doubt and have firmly maintained that masturbation is an intrinsically and gravely disordered action.' " (CCC, 2352; CDF, Persona humana, n. 9)

Other grave sexual sins include: incest, sexual abuse of children, pedophilia, all unnatural sexual acts; also, any acts which break a vow of chastity.

Abortion: direct and voluntary abortion is always gravely immoral. "Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2270)

Contraception: use of artificial contraception, including pills, barrier methods, and other forms, is always gravely immoral, even within marriage.

Natural Family Planning: "Periodic continence, that is, the methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods, is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality…. The regulation of births represents one of the aspects of responsible fatherhood and motherhood. Legitimate intentions on the part of the spouses do not justify recourse to morally unacceptable means (… direct sterilization or contraception)." (CCC, n. 2370, 2399)

Other grave offenses against God and against the dignity of the human person include: in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, direct and voluntary sterilization, embryonic stem cell research, the promotion of so-called 'safe sex', same-sex marriage, and civil unions.

Faithfulness to Jesus Christ: "And calling together the crowd with his disciples, he said to them, 'If anyone chooses to follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me…. For whoever has been ashamed of me and of my words, among this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also will be ashamed of him, when he will arrive in the glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.' " (Mark 8:34-38).